



Ruin an Identity Thief's Party Over Spring Break

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MADISON – There is nothing fun or relaxing about finding out that your personal or financial information has been ripped off and misused while you are on spring break. To protect from identity and financial theft, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection offers simple tips for students and families to follow both during and after their vacations.

“The best course of action while you are away on your trip is to limit the business you conduct on public WiFi networks and to minimize the amount of information you share through social media,” said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection.

“When you return home, take a defensive stance against identity theft by reviewing your social media, email and financial accounts and updating all of your passwords.”

While you are on vacation:

- **Use caution with public WiFi.** Avoid doing any banking or transmitting any sensitive personal information online using a public WiFi network. Only enter sensitive information over password-protected networks and in secure websites (those that start with “https://” – the “s” stands for secure).
- **Keep personal documents close.** Make use of a room safe when available for mobile devices, valuables and sensitive documents like passports, ID cards, credit cards and airline tickets.
- **Always keep your mobile devices in a secure location.** Your smartphone, tablet and laptop contain a wealth of personal information like your contacts, messages, media files and schedules. Know where these devices are at all times and keep your phone secure in public. Log out of all websites so your accounts are not accessed if your device is lost or stolen.
- **Don't broadcast your trip.** If you share the details of your travel plans through social media, you are providing information for scammers to use in their ploys and for thieves to use in determining when your home is unattended. Limit the information you share and strengthen your account settings to only allow access to friends and family.

When you get home:

- **Change passwords.** Any website you accessed on your trip was fair game for scammers, so change all of your passwords – especially for your email account.
- **Check accounts.** Take a look through your bank and credit card accounts and identify any irregularities. Bring them to the immediate attention of your financial institution.
- **Check credit reports.** Your information could have been stolen while you were on break. Review your credit reports to ensure that no unexpected accounts have been created in your name.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wisconsin.gov>, send an e-mail to datcp@datcp.wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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